

global

Making everyone's day brighter

SHOW me the FUNNY

How brands can capitalise on the popularity of comedy podcasts

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Introduction

Why did the brand advertise through podcasts?

Because they wanted a sound investment.

It's often said that laughter is the shortest distance between two people. It's a shared moment of connection. Escapism. Almost a kind of therapy.

Today we have access to more humorous content than ever before. Technology means we are constantly connected; only a swipe or two away from catching up with friends, enjoying the latest memes - or increasingly, listening to a funny podcast.

Podcasts are on the rise. And comedy content is a driving force in this growth.

New research from Global illustrates this, with 80% of listeners saying that comedy is more important than ever. 86% of people surveyed said that they're turning to the genre to improve their mood, and a whopping 91% said it allows them to escape.

According to Global's research, almost half of people in the UK listen to comedy daily. In

fact, 70% of people describe it as their 'go-to' genre. And this figure is only going to increase.

We live in tumultuous times - and comedy provides a sense of escape. Audiences relish being able to dive into both familiar and unfamiliar topics, becoming part of conversations they wouldn't have anywhere else.

Global has a long and storied history in comedy, helping launch the careers of Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant, Elis James and John Robins, and many others on its radio brands.

We're proud of this past. But we're even more excited about the future.

This report is a deep-dive into the rising popularity of comedy podcasts, using bespoke research to unveil the opportunities for brands to forge powerful connections with audiences through the most unique force in the world: **laughter**.



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Chapter 1

Content: Finding your funny

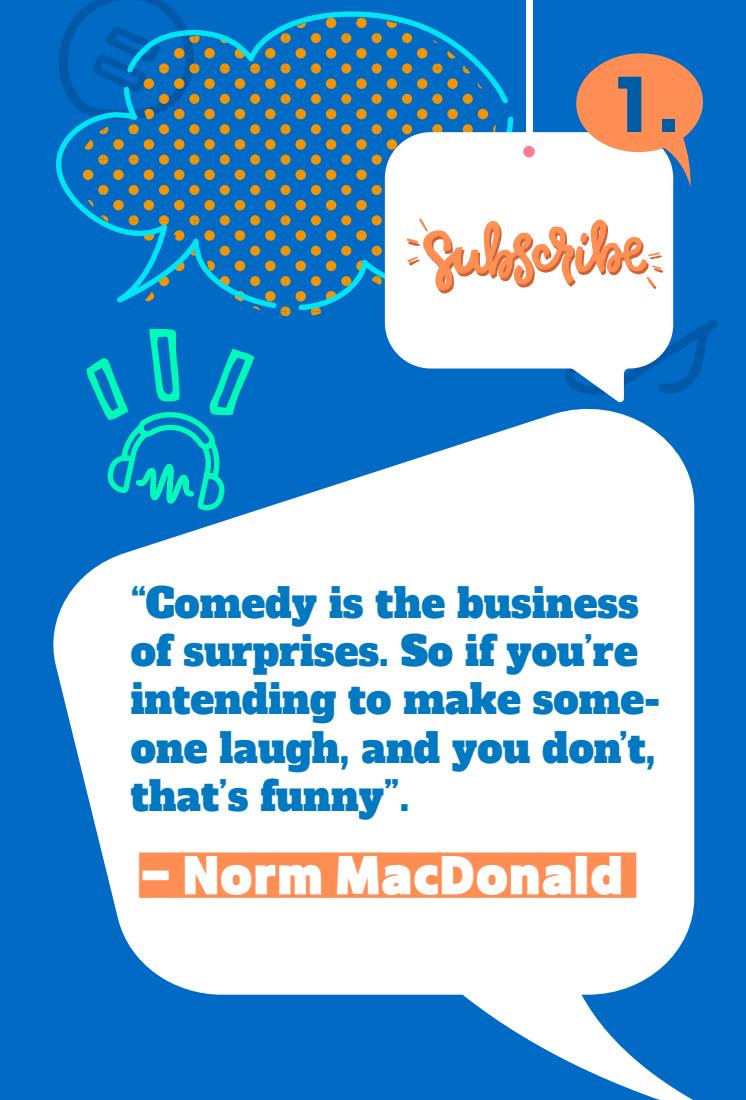
Comedy is a universal language. It's the social glue that sticks us together. Laughter can happen anytime, anywhere and for almost any reason. And it always means the same thing.

This is powerful.

Comedy is a broad church. It speaks to different people, cultures, and subjects - no matter how odd. Comedians Mike Wozniak, Henry Paker and Benjamin Partridge on their podcast Three Bean Salad can make even the most bizarre and seemingly dull topics - like oats, dentists and slippers - hilarious.

And then you have Michael and Hilary Whitehall rejoicing in the humour of the everyday on their podcast 'The Wittering Whitehalls', covering hugely relatable and hilarious topics as a springboard into side-splitting rants and stories.

There truly is something for everyone. Consequently, there is an uncountable number of sub-genres which exist within comedy. The fact that shows are labelled "comedy" is probably unfair. You wouldn't



"Comedy is the business of surprises. So if you're intending to make someone laugh, and you don't, that's funny".

– Norm MacDonald

just go to a "music" event or night - you would go to a specific sub-genre. Like Reggae, or House, or Classical.

It's the same with comedy. It's a hugely inclusive category. But you can't make everyone laugh. Listeners and brands need to find their specific comedy tribe - a community where they feel a strong, natural connection to the people, topics, and jokes within it.

Our research has found that comedy podcasts are successful with audiences for a variety of reasons:

A.

They're personal and unique

B.

They're accessible

C.

They make listener's feel like they're part of something

D.

They're personality driven



A. They're personal and unique

Whilst scripted comedy available on other platforms will always draw a laugh it's the often unscripted nature of comedy podcasts that delivers something really special.

Less censored, relatable, real world conversations around topics and subjects listeners identify with drives a deeper sense of engagement, making comedy podcasts feel more personal and intimate.

80%

Say they can relate to the topics in comedy podcasts

83%

Prefer comedy that is relatable and feels like it's talking to them

87%

Say a comedy podcast feels like chatting with / hearing from friends



Compared to other forms of comedy, funny podcasts...

Feel more real / less scripted than other media **84%**

Are more intimate / personal than other forms of comedy **84%**

Can feel more natural than other forms of comedy **79%**

Feel less edited / censored than other forms of comedy **79%**

Q: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about comedy/funny podcasts?

A. They're personal and unique

"A podcast between two people or a small group makes it feel as if you're part of that group. Though there are thousands of listeners, it doesn't seem that way to me. It feels as if I'm in the room with them."

"I completely get in the zone with headphones on. I feel like they're directly speaking to me and there's no visual interruptions."

"You can't hear the audience participation. The humour feels more natural. The comedy usually emerges from discussing other topics rather than just to make you laugh. That feels more natural. Like it would with your friends."

"A podcast might go off topic and things become funny because they evolve via an unscripted conversation... a conversation takes an unexpected direction, or an anecdote is told in a way that wouldn't happen on tv or radio... it's a one-off and wouldn't be recreated over and over"

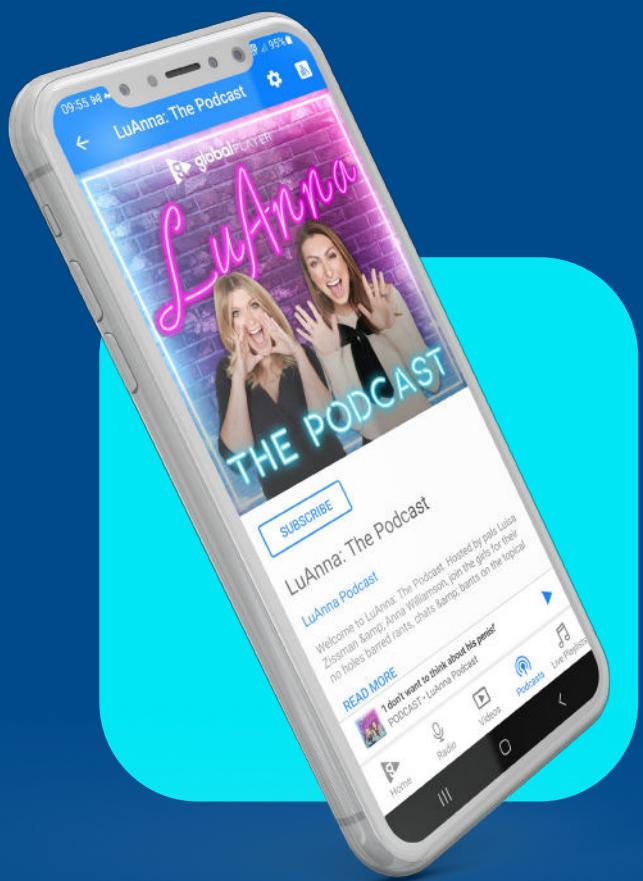
"It feels as though you are being spoken to directly rather than just through the TV. They even feel more personal than a stage show, you're listening to people talk from their 'homes' to you in your home, usually about topics you might discuss with your family and friends in an informal setting too."

B. They're accessible

Being able to access comedy content anywhere, at anytime, is a key factor that sets podcasting apart from any other other media.

Comedy podcast listeners choose a place and time that works for them, weaving their favourite shows into the fabric of their daily lives.

There is something for everyone, comedy comes in many forms and offers access to content and topics listeners don't find in many other formats and platforms.



83%

Like comedy podcasts over other forms of comedy as they are able to do other things whilst listening

79%

Regularly listen to accompany another task they are doing (e.g. commuting, work, chores, exercise)

74%

Say they like comedy podcasts because the range of topics can't be found on other platforms

Q: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about comedy/funny podcasts?

C. Listeners feel like they're a part of something

Podcasts are a unique form of comedy; listeners feel like they are a part of something, 'in the know', 'belonging to a community'. Loyal listeners engage and invest in their favourite shows beyond the podcast through paid for content, social media and live events.

74%

Say listening to a comedy podcast series on a regular basis feels like being a part of something

75%

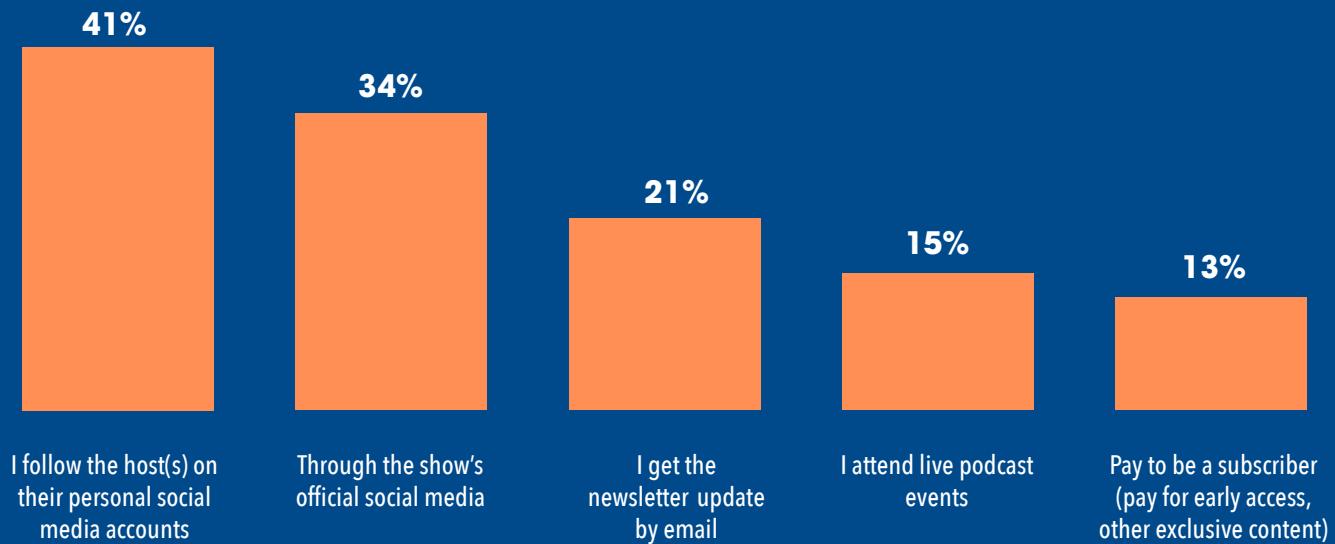
Regularly talk about or share comedy content with friends and family

57%

Say comedy podcasts feel like being in the know



Other ways listeners interact with favourite comedy podcasts



D. They're personality-driven

Podcasts are inherently more personality driven than many other forms of comedy. Comedy podcast audiences like to hear authentic opinions openly discussed. This helps to create a deeper connection between host and listener that really engages and drives loyalty with audiences.



76%

Feel more of a connection to hosts and their guests in podcast compared to other forms of comedy

70%

Feel like they get to know hosts and their guests in a more in depth / intimate way through a comedy podcast



83%

Say hosts are less afraid to voice their opinions and discuss topics more openly in a podcast environment

67%

Say they like to listen to podcasts to keep up to date with their favourite comedians / presenters

Q: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about comedy/funny podcasts?

D. They're personality-driven

GG

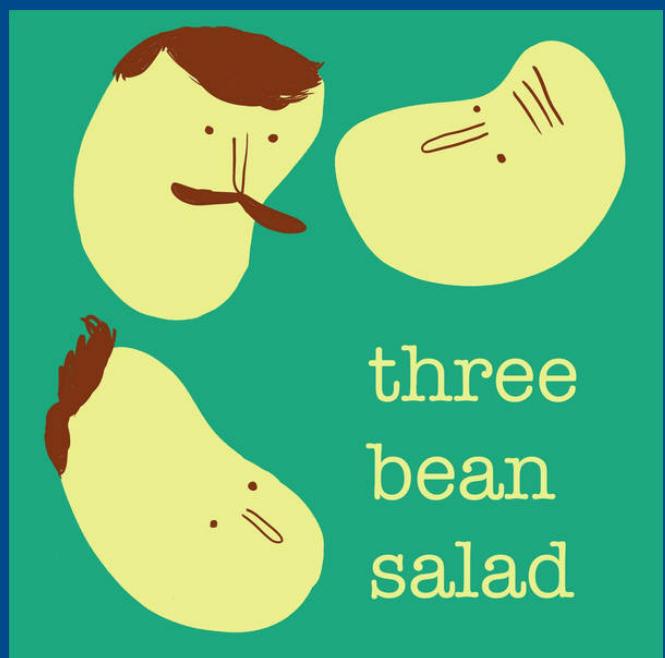
"Podcasts can be more detailed and tell you things aligned with the comedians thoughts and beliefs, rather than just their comedy routine/performance."

"I think podcasts are an opportunity to hear more impromptu and personality driven content, that feels more authentic. I like it when I get to know more about the podcaster."

"Comedy podcasts are generally more spontaneous and cover every day subjects not normally spoken about in general. You really feel like your part of the comedians friends group! It's less scripted and has unexpected comedy moments that I find very funny. It's usually more quick thinking and ad lib."

"it's just funny listening to hosts on podcasts bounce off each other. They get onto weird and wonderful topics. something you can discuss with whoever you're listening with"

"I like that you get to see a different side to people through a podcast, rather than just seeing a 60 second video of them somewhere that's funny, you get to spend a long time listening to them and understanding them better as a person and a comedian."



Chapter 2

Engagement: Build it and they will come

Podcasts aren't always a big success after one episode. Professionally funny people, podcasts and brands all have one thing in common: consistency. And our research shows that comedy podcast listeners are just as consistent in their listening habits.

68% said they listen to comedy podcasts 2-3 times a week; and 65% said they feel a need to keep up to date with comedy podcasts more than other media, suggesting that this behaviour is habitual.

This is also in great part due to the sense of community and fandom that comedy podcasts elicit amongst listeners. The most influential podcasts naturally build communities of loyal, engaged listeners with unique in-jokes and subcultures. They build "social currency" with audiences through a shared experience.

Often, podcasters bring with them a huge army of loyal fans from other platforms – like chart-topping social media stars LadBaby aka Mark and Roxanne Hoyle. On their debut podcast 'Live Laugh Love', Mark's quick-witted and comedic view on life, combined with Rox's happy and positive approach allows them to deliver the same fun content that their fans love and adore, in a new format.

The importance of fan communities cannot be understated; there is a huge appetite for engagement and interaction from them. Loyal 'Lufanians' (fans of Global's LuAnna podcast) are actively encouraged to help shape the content of the podcast, with a direct line for suggestions via the official Facebook group and even WhatsApp. And if



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"Thankfully, persistence is a great substitute for talent."

- Steve Martin



virtual isn't enough - Lufanians can see their favourite hosts live at nationwide sell-out tours.

Comedy podcasts excel beyond the content. They creatively (and meaningfully) connect with audiences. And this, in turn, offers brands an opportunity to authentically tap in and add value to the experience. But it isn't a case of just sticking a label on a podcast that's popular with a target audience. It works best when a relationship is cultivated carefully and consistently.

Personality-driven content

72%

Listen to up to 6 different comedy podcasts per month

65%

Feel more of a need to keep up-to-date with a series of comedy podcasts than other media

68%

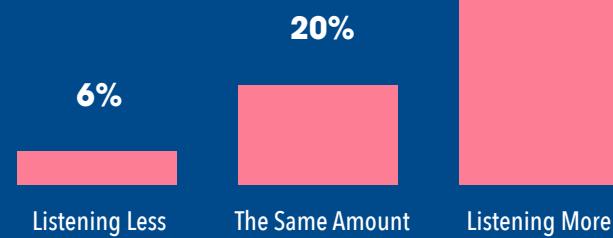
Listen to comedy podcasts at least 2-3 times a week

Q: Do you subscribe to any comedy/funny podcasts? If so, how many?

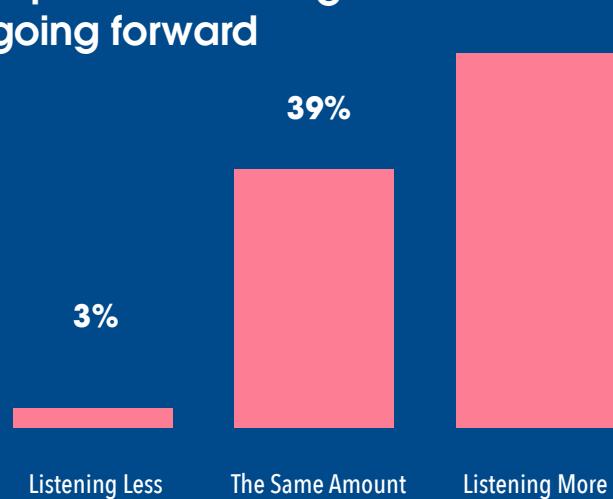
Q: On average, how often do you listen to comedy/funny podcasts? / How many different comedy/funny podcasts do you listen to each month?

Q: Thinking about the number of comedy/funny podcasts you listen to now compared to one year ago, would you say you are listening to...

Listening compared to last year



Expected listening going forward



71%

Say comedy podcasts are a larger part of their routine vs 12 months ago

57%

Listen within 48hrs of a podcast being released



Chapter 3

Authenticity: What makes comedy unique

Comedy is about surprises. Our research shows that a huge part of the appeal of comedy podcasts is their unscripted and uncensored nature.

Comedians and podcast hosts aren't scared of casually pushing the boundaries. They are largely unconstrained. And audiences love it. For example, Paul Chowdhry has built a successful comedy career with his dead-pan delivery and dark sense of humour, and listeners of his Global podcast, 'The Paul Chowdhry Podcast', never know what they're going to get when they tune in every week.

Good chemistry between hosts and their guests is also key to creating this sense of authenticity. The '100% honesty guarantee' coupled with a brilliant rapport between best friends Vogue Williams and Joanna McNally has helped them create a cult-like following for their hugely successful Global Original podcast, 'My Therapist Ghosted Me'.

Audiences feel like they are part of an unfolding idea, like laughing with an old friend about new things. Consequently, the creative possibilities are endless - as long as everything has the ethos of the show at heart.

" I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE SOMEBODY - BUT NOW I REALISE I SHOULD'VE BEEN MORE SPECIFIC. "

- Lily Tomlin



Podcasts offer plenty that's unique in the comedy landscape



Q: Thinking about all of the platforms you access comedy/funny content on, which of the below best describes why you use them or how you feel about them? I listen/watch comedy/funny content on this platform or other platforms?

Why are comedy podcasts so unique?

- Getting to know hosts and guests in-depth
- Having a laugh with friends
- Feel part of something
- Different perspectives
- Topics I care about
- Me time
- Most relatable
- Least censored

Chapter 4

Advertising: How brands can tap into the power of comedy podcasts

Podcasts are continuing to grow in popularity. And media spend is following.

According to the IAB UK, Podcast ad spend outpaced overall market growth by almost two-thirds last year - an increase of 33% year-on-year. Brands understand the value of the medium and the deep engagement it offers.

But how do audiences feel about the growing presence of brands, ads and sponsored content? Our research shows that 90% of comedy podcast fans expect to hear advertising - and 74% said that they are more likely to remember what they hear.

This is especially true if the advertisement is read by the host directly. Comedy podcast hosts relish the creative opportunity to work with brands - and this direct endorsement supercharges the engagement and effectiveness for the brand. Hosts intuitively understand what their audiences want - and how they expect content to be delivered.

Consequently, brands can tap into this trust. Listeners are 56% more likely to trust the advertising when it's delivered by the host, with 68% preferring to hear ads from hosts that have used the product or service themselves. Equally, audiences trust hosts to identify what brands are relevant - which means almost every brand is welcome.



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"I do it for the money."

-Ricky Gervais

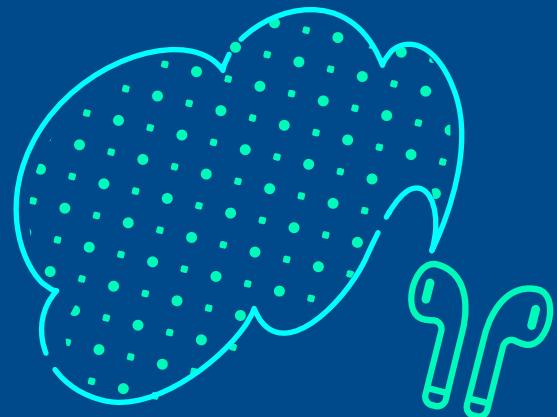
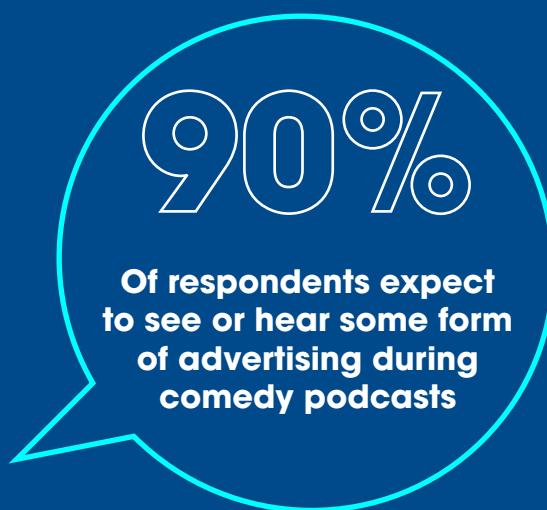
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Podcasts are an engaging space for brands

Comedy podcast audiences expect to hear advertising and feel that this reflects positively for the brands associated.

Because audiences choose where and when to listen they are also more likely to be engaged and remember what they have heard.



74%

Are more likely to remember what was discussed on comedy podcasts than other forms of comedy.

“

If it's something I'm passionate about and I hear a brand is endorsing it, of course I'm going to have a positive opinion about it.



Q: Do you expect to see or hear some form of advertising during the majority of (non-BBC) comedy/funny podcasts?

Q: In terms of brand image, do you feel audio advertising within a comedy/funny podcast environment reflects positively or negatively for brands?

Ads within comedy podcasts are trusted, personal & engaging

Listeners are more likely to respond to ads because they find them more memorable than other formats.

17%

Think the ads have to be funny

57%

More likely to concentrate on ads

55%

Ads are more memorable

60%

Host read ads feel more personal

49%

I have acted /visited brand site

59%

Appropriate for vast majority of brands

How do you feel about host read adverts within comedy podcasts?

68%



I prefer host reads when it's clear the host actually uses the product/service

57%

Host read adverts are entertaining

57%

Host read adverts sound natural and authentic

56%

I am more likely to trust an advert if it is read by the podcast host

55%

I find adverts within the funny/comedy podcasts I listen to more memorable than other formats (i.e. TV, online etc.)

53%

Host read ads have made me consider new products and/or services (i.e. TV, online etc.)

The power of the host:

Podcasts are by their nature more authentic. Ads work best when there is a clear fit with the brand and host, this is what makes them effective: Over 50% say they more likely to trust an advertisement if it's read by the host, that they're entertaining, and that they're more likely to trust a host read ad.

Q: Thinking about advertising within comedy funny podcasts, please let me know the extent you agree/disagree with the following statements.

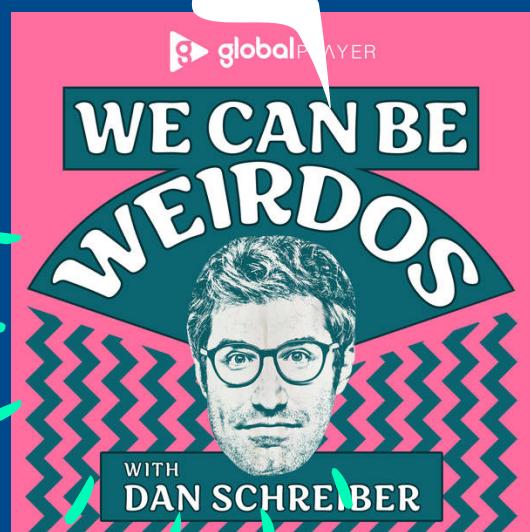
Advertising within comedy podcasts

I find [host reads] engaging – I also trust the podcast hosts I listen to and I'm probably more inclined to believe they've done due diligence on brands they affiliate themselves and the podcast with.

"If you are already listening to the podcast and a brand is advertised during it you are more likely to support the brand as you would think they too are in agreement and supportive of the content you are listening to."

"If it's something I'm passionate about and I hear a brand is endorsing it, of course I'm going to have a positive opinion about it."

"It makes brands feel more personal and familiar."



Conclusion

Laughter is the shortest distance between two people. And through podcasts, that distance is getting shorter every day.

Comedy has something for everyone - and every brand. People are devoting huge amounts of time and attention to funny podcasts because they have a meaningful connection with shows and hosts that they love. These bonds are powerful.

Brands can embed themselves authentically into these conversations with advertising and sponsorship which adds to the listening experience, rather than feeling separate or segmented.

And it's easier to do than ever before with Global and DAX, the proprietary technology that connects advertisers with an audience of more than 130 million people worldwide, inserting targeted advertising into music streaming services, connected radio listening, podcasts and mobile games.

Thanks to DAX, advertisers have access to a plethora of comedy podcasts - including Global's own 'The Paul Chowdhry Podcast' and 'My Therapist Ghosted Me', as well as LadBaby's 'Live Laugh Love' and many more - providing opportunities to naturally embed messaging into each show's unique experience.

Humour really is a serious business.



"They laughed when I said I was going into comedy ... Well they're not laughing now."

-Bob Monkhouse

To find out more contact:
Sarah Ray, Head of Podcast Sales
sarah.ray@global.com

"Comedy podcasts are a great home for audio ad campaigns - from host reads to spot ads and integrated features, there's something for every advertiser. And rest assured, there's no need for laugh out loud humour from brands. The relationship between comedy podcast hosts and their fans is particularly unique and positive, allowing brand and product messaging to be seamlessly integrated into a show, to inspire listeners whilst they're feeling relaxed and happy."

Katie Bowden
Global's Director of Commercial for Audio



"2023 has been an incredible year for podcasts and it goes without saying that I'm a fan of funny ones. Positive feedback from listeners is always fantastic to see so I'm delighted with this report's findings. In particular that 74% said listening to a comedy podcast on a regular basis feels like being a part of something."

Comedy podcasts give comic talent a platform to be unfiltered, raw and true to themselves, very much like live comedy has done for decades. In that respect, comedy podcast can give audiences the unfiltered content they can't get anywhere else in the broadcast space.

I'm proud that our content slate contains some of the best comedy podcasts in the UK - helping to spread a much-needed dose of laughter and fun. We're excited to be continuing to grow our comedy slate here at Global."

Chris Lander
Head of Comedy & Entertainment Podcasts at Global

Summary

- From natural disasters, a pandemic, to ongoing wars and a cost of living crisis, people are dealing with a lot right now. Research shows that people turn to comedy when they're in need of escapism, and in today's world comedy is more important than ever.
- With this in mind, we're seeing people seeking out comedy podcasts more than ever. Comedy podcasts are at a point where they're well and truly a part the regular routine – they're habitual, with almost 1 in 4 listening to a comedy podcast every single day, and almost half listening multiple times a week. We're also seeing dedicated listenership, with people tuning in to listen within the first few days of a podcast being released and interacting with their favorite podcasts beyond listening.
- And it's not going to slow down anytime soon: 74% are listening to more comedy podcasts than one year ago, and 57% agree they will be spending more time going forward.
- So, what's causing this growth? There's a multitude of reasons, but the key thing is that comedy podcasts are unique. They're different to other genres of podcasts in that they can't be easily defined as one type of podcast. They're also different to other forms of comedy in that they're less performative, more authentic, and listeners feel like they're a part of a community and part of the conversation as opposed to just being told a story.
- We're also seeing that a big part of what people like about comedy podcasts is that they're personality driven. People get to know their favourite comedians and hosts in a more natural setting, and they see sides of people that they don't get anywhere else. The content is less edited, and it gives that feeling of having a chat with friends.
- In good news for brands, the authenticity and relatability of comedy podcasts also translates into advertising effectiveness: the fact that brands are supporting their favourite podcast reflects positively on them, and listeners feel that it makes brands feel more personal by association.
- Due to this emphasis on personality, host reads in particular are powerful for advertisers: 60% say adverts delivered by the host feels more personal than other types of adverts (including TV and online). There's also no pressure for brands to try to be funny, it's all about authenticity: people like when the host actually uses the service and when it sounds natural.
- Comedy is an important part of people's lives, and comedy podcasts are here to stay.

Methodology

Research panel:

Global's consumer panel **Work.Shop.Play**

Quantitative research:

April 2023 sample size, n=926

Targeted comedy podcast consumers (defined as someone who listens to comedy podcasts at least once a month).

NB: The sample shown throughout the deck consists of comedy podcast listeners only.

Sample:

Age:

18-34: **20%**

35-54: **30%**

55+: **50%**

Social Grade:

ABC1: **69%**

C2DE: **31%**

Gender:

Male: **42%**

Female: **58%**

Families:

Kids in Household: **44%**

How we've defined comedy:

Comedy can take many forms, and comedy podcasts aren't easily defined in the way comedy is in other forms of media. They can range from long-form interviews hosted by comedians, stand-up and improv, funny reviews or stories, or conversational topics that are presented in a funny way. In this study, we've asked people to consider anything they find humorous/funny as a comedy podcast.



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